

**The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.**

**Present: Ed Magill, John Flaherty, Chair Joe Cardello, Bruce Santa Anna. John Czyzewicz arrived at 7:55 p.m. Absent: Dr. Lucien Benoit, John O'Donnell, Assistant Solicitor Bob Rossi. Also present: Town Planner Michael Phillips.**

## **I. Recommendation on Branch Village Revitalization Plan**

**Mr. Flaherty addressed the Board as chair of the Branch Village Revitalization Task Force. He referred to an article in the Valley Breeze on November 15, which stated that Town Administrator Robert Lowe endorsed a Wal-Mart store in Branch Village. Mr. Flaherty stated that this is a gross misunderstanding and that there are not now, nor have there ever been, plans for big box retail in Branch Village. Mr. Lowe was present and addressed the Board to state that he is not in favor of a Wal-Mart or any other big box retail in Branch Village. He said he will be in touch with the Valley Breeze to correct the misunderstanding. He said he did not want the hard work and extensive planning of the task force to be destroyed by this story. Mr. Flaherty stressed to the Board that the report prepared by the task force with the Horsley Witten Group states that big box retail is not appropriate for the Branch Village area, and there are absolutely no plans for such development.**

**Nathan Kelly of the Horsley Witten Group, the lead planning**

consultant for the plan, addressed the Board to give a rough outline of the information in the Branch Village Revitalization Task Force Final Report. He stated that these are not set plans and will not dictate what will be in the area; the report is designed to illustrate concepts and provide a framework for what will hopefully someday be part of the zoning ordinance. This document is to be a starting point in planning for the future and a guide to the town to think about the area in a more concrete way. The task force envisions the area as a more pedestrian-friendly part of town, with a “park once environment.” The plan suggests moving buildings toward the street, with parking behind buildings. The sidewalks and curb cuts will be improved to make the area safe for walking. The task force would like this area of town to be a destination, rather than a pass-through area. They would also like to use the Branch River as a natural centerpiece for the village, emphasizing a balance between development and the environment.

Mr. Flaherty stated that this vision is the product of many different stakeholder groups in town, which adds strength to the integrity of the plan. The task force is seeking support from the Planning Board that the town can take the next step with zoning. He stated that this plan gives property owners more flexibility in what they can do in their property. At this time, the owners are limited by the zoning of the area, with regard to what uses are allowed, as well as sizes of buildings (one-story vs. multi-story).

**Mr. Flaherty made a motion that the Planning Board send communication to the Town Council that the Branch Village Revitalization Task Force Final Report is consistent with the town's Comprehensive Plan and should be adopted. Mr. Magill seconded the motion. Planning Board vote was as follows: AYE: Mr. Magill, Chair Mr. Cardello, Mr. Santa Anna, Mr. Flaherty. Motion passed with a vote of 4-0.**

**Mr. Flaherty made a motion to send a favorable recommendation to the Town Council in support of a 3-month moratorium on building permits, with an automatic 3-month extension for all parcels in the Branch Village area, excluding property with applications that have already been filed. Mr. Santa Anna seconded the motion. Planning Board vote was as follows: AYE: Mr. Magill, Chair Mr. Cardello, Mr. Santa Anna, Mr. Flaherty. Motion passed with a vote of 4-0.**

**The Chair made a motion to take a 5-minute recess at 7:35 pm. Mr. Santa Anna seconded the motion, with all in favor. The Chair called the meeting back to order at 7:45 pm.**

**The Board did not have a quorum present for the approval of the**

**decision for Rankin Estates. Mr. Santa Anna made a motion to move this item to the end of the meeting. Mr. Flaherty seconded the motion, with all in favor.**

## **II. Sign Ordinance Review**

**Mr. Phillips told the Board that he had met with the consultants who are working on the town's ordinance review about the sign ordinance.**

**They said that it may be problematic to work on the ordinance in pieces, but they will look at proposed changes to the sign ordinance as part of the zoning ordinance as a whole. He referred to the design review process of the ordinance, which discusses having sign panels proportional to buildings/development. This would mean bigger developments have bigger signs. The proposed changes to the sign ordinance would be consistent with these design review regulations. Mr. Phillips stated that this portion of the ordinance provides guidelines, not specific dimensional requirements. He will keep working with the consultants to come up with a proposal that will give the Board a level of comfort in being able to send a positive recommendation to the Town Council. He hopes to have an updated draft ready in two weeks.**

## **III. Approval of Decision for Rankin Estates**

**Mr. Czyzewicz arrived to the meeting at 7:55 pm. Mr. Flaherty was recused due to previous direction from the ethics commission. The**

**Chair asked for any comments from the Board. The Chair stated that he had found a few minor grammatical corrections in the decision, which he would give to Mr. Phillips. Mr. Santa Anna stated that he would like to know what they were, so he could fix his copy before voting. The Chair went through the corrections with the other Board members. All were minor grammatical changes. He stated that all the previous comments from the Board members have been incorporated into this document.**

**Mr. Santa Anna made a motion to approve the findings of fact and written decision for the Rankin Estates Master Plan, location: Douglas Pike, Angela Way, Brookside Drive, Leonard Drive & Rankin Path, Assessor Plat 14 Lots 17, 19, 20, 29, 31-34, 36, 88, 93, 107, 123, 128, 135,139,140, 141,145, 147, 159, 202 & 242. Mr. Magill seconded the motion. Planning Board vote was as follows: AYE: Mr. Magill, Mr. Santa Anna, Chair Mr. Cardello, Mr. Czyzewicz. Motion passed, with a vote of 4-0.**

#### **IV. Planning Board Issues & Concerns**

##### **a. Elizabeth Avenue--Status Update**

**Mr. Phillips informed the Board that he had been in touch with the contractor and subcontractor regarding the paving on Elizabeth Avenue. The prep work has begun for the final paving and grading of**

the road. Mr. Phillips has discussed the situation with Mr. Rossi and as long as they continue with the work, there should be no need for any legal action.

The Chair stated that, given the history of problems with this development, he would like to send a letter to the developer that the town will not be responsible for maintenance on the streets or damage to trucks used for storm maintenance. Mr. Phillips stated that there was a storm maintenance arrangement in place last year and he would look into having this continued for this year. The Chair stated that this situation must be brought to a conclusion and he does not want the work to stop now that it has been started. Mr. Phillips said if there are no signs of the work progressing, he will send a letter to the developer. He also informed the Board that he will be setting up a meeting with the contractors to coordinate exactly what work will be done. Mr. Santa Anna and the Chair both indicated that they would like to attend this meeting, if they are available.

Mr. Santa Anna made a motion to adjourn at 8:14 pm. Mr. Flaherty seconded the motion, with all in favor.

Respectfully submitted,  
Angela Pugliese  
Planning Board Secretary